



April 17, 2012

House Oversight, Reform and Ethics Committee
Lansing, Michigan

Re: HB 5459 – Open Meetings Act

Dear Committee Members,

The Michigan Environmental Council has as one of its priorities to encourage public participation in government decision making. The Open Meetings Act since its passage in 1976 has assisted in bringing decision making into the public light and encouraged participation by the public in those decisions.

I support the proposed clarification to the act included in HB 5459 regarding procedures for when a public body bypasses the 18 hour rule for holding meetings.

I would urge the committee to also include one other clarification to the Open Meetings Act as it pertains to legislative committee hearings.

Article IV, Section 17 of the Michigan Constitution states:

"Each house of the legislature may establish the committees necessary for the efficient conduct of its business and the legislature may create joint committees. On all actions on bills and resolutions in each committee, names and votes of members shall be recorded. Such vote shall be available for public inspection. Notice of all committee hearings and a clear statement of all subjects to be considered at each hearing shall be published in the journal in advance of the hearing."

We note that this notice is designed to give the public advanced notice of both the time and place of a committee meeting, but also include a "clear statement of all subjects to be considered" at the meeting. We urge that you amend the Open Meetings Act to include this requirement.

Sincerely, 

James Clift, Policy Director